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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 000357

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/RPM AND EUR/WE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/19/2015

TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [AF](#) [FR](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: NATO/AFGHANISTAN: FRENCH UNDECIDED ON STAGE II CONTRIBUTION

REF: A) STATE 2743 B) PARIS 293 C) 2004 PARIS 8650  
(NOTAL)

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER-COUNSELOR JOSIAH ROSENBLATT, REASON 1  
.4 B AND D

1. (C) Summary: Responding to Ref A demarche for building on NATO foreign minister's meeting, French officials have reiterated their reservations on Provisional Reconstruction Teams (PRT) and are holding off on taking a decision to contribute a quick response force (QRF) for Stage II Forward Support Base. The French cite existing worldwide demands on their military, as well as budgetary constraints, for their go slow approach. Defense Minister Alliot-Marie informed the Ambassador that after the Afghan legislative elections in the summer, France would revisit its potential participation in both the PRTs and the QRF. MOD and MFA officials also emphasized that France believes that allies need to encourage the Afghan government to engage on an effective counternarcotics plan. End summary.

2. (C) We presented ref A points on Afghanistan January 6 to MOD diplomatic advisor Bertrand Besancenot and to the MFA's NATO deskoff Xavier Chatel. (Note: DAS-equivalent director Francois Carrel-Billiard was out of the country.) In a separate meeting with Defense Minister Alliot-Marie on January 12, the Ambassador also conveyed our appreciation for French ISAF contributions and inquired whether France would participate in the Stage II western expansion through a contribution to the QRF. French reactions, especially as expressed by the defense minister (ref B), were that France was not prepared at this time to expand its operations beyond its planned contribution to parliamentary elections security of six combat aircraft with support personnel. MOD and MFA officials emphasized that Afghanistan was important for France, but that at present the French military was stretched thinly through its commitments in the Balkans, Africa (Ivory Coast), tsunami relief, and in Afghanistan to the OEF, Afghan army training and ISAF. Besancenot indicated that a final decision on French planning for stage II expansion had not been made, but that France would reconsider its actions after the legislative elections. He added that France shared SACEUR's concern that adequate means should be found to meet this western expansion requirement of ISAF. (Comment: We note that deliberations are ongoing as Chatel contacted us on 19 January seeking additional clarifications on our demarche.)

3. (C) MOD and MFA officials citing our earlier paper on broadening NATO's approach in Afghanistan in 2005, as well as our recent demarche on Stage II expansion, emphasized that the drug trade represented a major threat to security and democracy in Afghanistan. They believe the Karzai government is insufficiently engaged on this problem and that it is essential that we assist the Afghans, in addition to what ISAF is already doing. (Note: the MFA's Carrel-Billiard said he had spoken with EUR/RPM director in Brussels last December and conveyed to him some French thoughts on next steps in Afghanistan.)

4. (U) Minimize considered.  
Wolff